

# LOCAL PROHIBITION

Its Effect on Business

By

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West Toronto



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A cry that has done service in many a campaign in favor of the Bar is that Local Option injures business. People seem to take it for granted that men who have money to spend will not go where there is no liquor, and that drinking stimulates expenditure. They seem to forget that the man who spends money freely over the Bar rarely has much to spend else where, and that unnatural stimulation to trade is, like the unnatural stimulation of the heart followed by a reaction that leaves one in worse condition than ever.

As a matter of fact, one of the most striking results of Local Option is the business prosperity that it brings. Towns without the open Bar invariably surpass their rivals that have the saloons. The reason is not far to seek. A sober community is the best support of legitimate business. Men who are steady producers and do not waste their means and energies, have the most money to invest in business and to spend on the necessaries of life. The following examples may make this point clear.

Moorehead and Fargo are two towns on opposite sides of the river that separates Minnesota from North Dakota. Years ago, North Dakota adopted Prohibition. The two towns were then about equal. The wise ones said that poor Fargo would go to ruin without its bars, and that Moorehead would advance by leaps and bounds at its expense. The reverse has proven true. Fargo's population, according to latest obtainable figures, was almost four times as large as Moorehead, its taxes were lower and its advantages superior in every respect.

Grand Forks is another example of the same tendency. This is practically one City divided into two sections by the Red River, leaving part in Minnesota and part in North Dakota. An article published in "The Pioneer" three years ago gave the following figures:—

Population of the whole City—20,000 persons.

East Grand Forks has 42 saloons.

West Grand Forks has none.

East Grand Forks has \$10,000 Revenue from Licenses.

West Grand Forks has none.

East Grand Forks has \$384,000 Assessment.

West Grand Forks has \$3,500,000 Assessment.

East Grand Forks has a Bonded Debt of 25%.

West Grand Forks has a Bonded Debt of 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ %.

East Grand Forks has poor Hotels.

West Grand Forks has excellent Hotels.

The taxes in West Grand Forks are 20% lower than in East Grand Forks, in spite of the fact that the latter gets that \$10,000 annually from its Licenses. Many of the people who work and make their money in East Grand Forks, come over into West Grand Forks to live, while scarcely a single instance is known of men working in the Prohibition town and going across to the License town to reside.

Mr. C. W. Trickett was appointed Assistant State Attorney of Kansas, and in 1906 was instructed by Governor Hoch to enforce the Prohibition Law. He speaks as follows regarding the beginning of his campaign:—

"There are thousands of good people all over the country who believe that the sale of liquor and dens of vice are necessary to the prosperity of a City or State. I recall that when the fight started in our Country, delegation after delegation of business men protested and said that if we closed the saloons it would stop our growth, destroy the business of the merchants, deplete the deposits of the Bank, stop the erection of buildings, render houses vacant, increase taxation, reduce the price of real estate, cause people to go over to Kansas City, Mo., to do their shopping, and spend their money, and ruin our town generally. One day a delegation composed of two bankers and three merchants, who had been appointed by the business interests of the City, came to my office and spent an entire morning presenting these arguments and begging me not to enforce the Law."



Notwithstanding all this the Law was enforced. On June 18, 1906, there were 256 saloons in Wyandott County, Kansas, of which Kansas City is the Seat, and hundreds of other evil resorts. On July 3rd, following, there was not a saloon nor an evil resort of any kind in the County, and there have been none since. Mr. Trickett thus describes the effect on business :—

“ The Committee of two bankers and three merchants who, as I told you, came to protest against the enforcement of the Law about 2 years ago, will now tell you that they were mistaken and that the abolition of liquor selling has been of decided benefit instead of injury to the business interests of the City. They will tell you that the deposits of our Banks have increased more than \$2,000,000 since the saloons were closed, and that the merchants have had to employ additional clerks to attend to their business.

“ I can show you a letter from the President of the largest Bank in our City, who was a member of the Committee that came to protest, in which he says that within one year after the whiskey joints and Gambling dens were closed his deposits increased \$1,700,000. He says in his letter :— ‘ We think we have the accounts of more than 50% of the business men in this City, and have talked with a large number of them about the effect of the closing of the saloons on their business. With a few exceptions, they have stated that they are pleased with the result. I believe this feeling is shared by a large majority of the Professional men and other intelligent citizens.’

“ I can show you a letter from the President of the Home City Bank, saying that his business has increased 46% as a result of the enforcement of the Prohibition Law. He says that when people are not permitted to spend money for a bad purpose, they will invest it for a good purpose. Mr. Atkinson, Vice-President of a Bank in Armourdale, one of our suburbs, says that his business has increased 36%. The President of one of our Savings Banks has written me that not only has his business increased 50% but that 75% of the new customers are of the class that formerly spent all their money for liquor.

“ One of our business men who was asked his opinion, wrote to a friend saying :— ‘ I have been in business in Kansas City, Kan., for 17 years, and there are more houses, and good houses, being built ; more people are buying homes, and good homes, and seeking investments, than in any year since I have lived here.’ . . . . .

“ The Official Records show that during the year after the closing of the saloons, from July 1st, 1906, to July 1st, 1907, Kansas City, Kan., showed an increase of 209.7 per cent. in building operations—the largest of any City in the Union. The next largest gain was 77%. Three times as many laboring men bought homes in our Town last year as ever before in its history.”

The same law governs the progress of communities on this side of the line. Westmount, on the borders of Montreal, has advanced with great strides, and its growth is due in no small measure to its Prohibitive by-law. West Toronto has doubled its population since closing its bars in 1904, and has grown proportionately in wealth and all that makes for greatness. Other instances might be given.

The causes of this are not far to seek.

1. People like to live where there is no bar. If a person who is bringing up a family is choosing a place of residence, they naturally prefer a town where there are no saloons. To attempt to bring up boys in the neighborhood of a public bar is to court disaster, and no one who realizes the danger will face it if it can be avoided.

2. There is greater productiveness where men are not tempted to drink. Not only is the waste stopped but they earn more. Assistant State Attorney Trickett says that in a short time after the Prohibition Law was enforced there, Kansas City rose from the seventh place to the fifth place as a manufacturing centre. On inquiring into the causes it was ascertained that 10 per cent. more labor was secured from the same men after the facilities for drinking were removed, and some said their work was 10 per cent. better. In our last campaign in West Toronto, some builders sent us signed statements to the effect that they got far steadier work from their men under Local Option than under Licenses. When the bars were open, the men would squander their money in drink Saturday afternoons and evenings, and often spend Sunday in carousal. The result was that they were unfit for work on Mon-



days, with the consequent loss to their employers and themselves. Now their men are always ready for work on Mondays. Not only have they ceased wasting their means, but they are earning more.

J. W. Lainson and Sons, Brick Manufacturers, sent the following striking statement to the Press Committee at that time :—" In the past it was the custom of the men to congregate at the Hotels of an evening and, to use their own language, get full. This always meant a day off the next day, the result of which was a loss of say 14,000 brick to the one machine. There are about twenty brick-yards in and around the town, averaging 1,500,000 brick each at the present time, 1906. It is safe to say that there are fully 200,000 more brick of an average made at each machine under Local Option than when the saloon was in operation. This would mean from the twenty brick-yards, 4,000,000 brick of an increase, which means in the business a turning of \$40,000 to the trade alone. The men are paid by the thousand, and figuring on the extra wages by the extra output, they would receive something like \$20,000 to \$25,000 in the season more than they would under the drinking system. As there are 350 men engaged in this business in the summer months, the difference to their families and to the merchants they deal with may be easily realized. Men are banking money, to my knowledge, some to the extent of \$100 to \$250 at the end of a season's work, a thing unheard of under the License system. And others are buying or intending to buy homes of their own, thereby more than making up in taxes the few dollars the Town would receive from the License-holders." This principle applies everywhere. Every factory loses largely from the drunkenness of employees and to lessen the facilities for drinking means enormously increased productiveness.

3. This makes almost unnecessary a third point, viz., that the money wasted over the bar under License goes, under Local Option, into other lines of business. A few examples from West Toronto, with which the writer is most familiar, will prove this.

A dry-goods merchant told the writer, shortly after the by-law came into effect that there were women coming into his store to buy the necessities of life, who had, he knew, more money to spend on these things than they had formerly.

A grocer, who had been long enough in Town to make comparisons, gave out this statement in our last Campaign :—" Before Local Option was introduced into this Town it was necessary in my credit business to send out three collectors a month to wait on my customers, and then all could not be collected. But since the coming in of Local Option, I have sold more groceries, received more cash payments, and have not found it necessary in a single instance to send out any collector."

A Boot and Shoe dealer said at the same time :—" In the three months before Local Option came into effect my business had increased very little over the same three months of the previous year. The three months after showed a marked increase ; in six months my trade had grown over 50%, and I am now doing double the trade that I did under License."

A very successful butcher, who is also an Alderman of the City, sent to a neighboring town this statement of his cash receipts before and after the closing of the bars. The figures for the month of September are given :—

September, 1903, Under License.....	\$2,148
September, 1904, Under Local Option.....	2,690
September, 1905, " " ".....	3,427
September, 1906, " " ".....	3,791

He was asked if this was not due to the growth of the place, and he answered :—" No, because while the town has grown, the trade is more cut up, owing to greatly increased competition." He added that he considered it largely due to the closing of the bars, which allowed more money to go into the necessities of life.

It is strange that one should need to cite facts in proof of what ought to be so manifest. If you stop the greatest system of waste in the community, prosperity will increase. There are many other arguments in favor of the abolition of the Bar, but in the controversy that is before us, let not our citizens forget that to prevent vice and excess means increased material prosperity. This brings untold blessing to the homes affected now, and it gives their young people a better start in life in all that makes for happiness, success and virtue.